As the recent mass migrations of refugees fleeing Syria make clear, there is a racial politics of immigration and multiculturalism at play in Europe. Germany opens her arms, Austria shuts her borders. Barbed wire fences and water cannons slow, if not halt, the flow of refugees into the West, amid fraught public debates about how to respond to these human and humanitarian tragedies, centred on the need to restrict the flows of ‘migrants’ that ‘threaten’ Europe’s territorial integrity. In light of this, *Racism and Sociology* makes a timely contribution. This book’s theorising of the postracial in matters of immigration and multiculturalism has relevance not only in Europe, but also in Australia, where governments refuse to comment on operational matters related to strict policies of border security. It is also of relevance to scholars working with the literatures of asylum seekers, immigration, and nationalisms.

In this series of seven essays, scholars from Europe, the UK, and Australia address the problem of the ‘postracial turn’ in social and cultural studies. The postracial is broadly understood to be a theoretical society where racial discrimination no longer occurs, an abstract conceptual ‘state’ in which social or institutional structures of racism no longer exist. Yet, conservatives have been quick to champion, for example, the election of the first Black President in the history of the United States as evidence of the existence of a postracial State. As Hund and Lentin point out in the essay that opens this collection, the problem is that ‘postracialism is a mechanism for the refusal of the discussion of the function of race: what race does rather than what race is’ (13). This book argues that the intellectual project of postracialism, in its concern to move ‘beyond’ race, poses dangers as it silences meaningful discussion about what racism is and how it persists in contemporary social structures and institutions. Sociology’s embrace of postracialism, this book contends, marks it as increasingly ‘defined by its silence on matters of racism’ (14), accompanied by a ‘failure to grapple with its own colonialist and racist legacies’ (17). This seven essays presented here argue that sociology must ‘reorient’ itself, to examine how its disciplinary underpinnings have been implicated in the production of racism from its origins to the present day, and to draw attention to the influences and marginalisation of Black sociological scholarship. The book is structured in two parts. The first, Exposés, traces the relations between sociology and racism from the earliest developments of the discipline to the elision of race in contemporary migration, ethnicity, and minority (MEM) studies. The second part, Studies, provides a range of critical interventions questioning how and why analyses of racism remain marginalised in contemporary sociological theorising.

Exposés opens with Hund’s essay, ‘Racism in White Sociology: From Adam Smith to Max Weber’, to show that racist ideologies such as Social Darwinism and the naturalisation of racist taxonomies were instrumental in the production of sociological knowledge. As Hund points out, ‘sociological thought considerably contributed to the modernisation of racism’ and played a role in legitimising imperial Europe’s colonial project (58). In ‘Postracial Silences’, Alana Lentin contends that the field of MEM is marked by ‘the glaring absence of race as a fundamental theoretical frame through which to historicise and decode the effects of migration in Western European societies’ (70), calling for a decolonising approach that is race-critical, and aware of the origins of racism and colonialism as specifically Western European concepts and practices (99).

Felix Lösing’s essay, ‘From the Congo to Chicago: Robert E Park’s Romance with Racism’, opens the section named Studies, with a searing critique of Robert Park, an important early contributor to American sociology. Lösing argues that Park’s work on the Congolese was couched
in a colonialist discursive frame that naturalised African inferiority, so that his campaign to reform the Congo was nothing less than the ‘civilising mission’ of imperialism (110-111). Further, Park’s construction of Black American tenant farmers as a ‘peasant class’ relied on a discourse of ‘primitivism’ that was actually an iconography of race (115), leading him to naturalise race relations and champion racial segregation. Les Back and Maggie Tate’s essay, ‘Telling about Racism’, traces the contribution of Stuart Hall as pre-eminent scholar of black experience and the ‘Du Bois of Britain’ (133). Reading Hall’s work as an ‘anti-sociology’, they argue that the white sociological tradition relegates the study of race relations to Black scholars on the basis that racism is outside of white experience. In light of this, they advocate the need to ‘do sociology differently’ (137). In dialogue with this, Barnor Hesse outlines the development of a white sociological tradition that ‘forecloses historical and contemporary commentary on the colonial-racial order of the West’ (143). To fully understand racism, Hesse argues, sociology needs first to refuse the tendency to reduce racism to individual ‘aberration or pathology’ (153), and secondly, to take critical account of a Black analytics to dislodge white sociology’s colour-blindness, particularly its blind-spot about whiteness.

Intervening into this blind-spot, Sirma Bilge argues that intersectionality is becoming increasingly depoliticised, as race is elided in the project to ‘scientise’ intersectionality as a legitimate field within sociology (‘Whitening Intersectionality’ 176). Its formations in critical-radical Black scholarship mean it has been considered an ‘insurgent’ knowledge, charged with ‘lacking scientific rigor and having politicized curricula’ (197, 194), which has resulted in attempts to ‘discipline’ intersectionality through a set of Eurocentric standards that also operate as ‘whitening’ strategies. Closing the volume, Silvia Rodríguez Maeso and Marta Araújo discuss ‘The Politics of (Anti-) Racism’ in their examination of approaches to ‘integration’ in Portugal. Contending that integration discourse is the product of the ‘institutionalisation of racism in European democracies’, they argue that it sustains a ‘systematic denial of racism in the Portuguese context’ (208).

Together, these essays aim to decolonise sociology of its under-interrogated racial assumptions. Racism and Sociology is an excellent intervention into sociological knowledge production and the relations of ‘race’ that structure European and ‘settler’ societies today. However, the inclusion of an index and notes on the contributors would be thoughtful additions to the text, as would some clear indication of what first brought these scholars together. Australian scholars with less than rudimentary German may at first find the use of German stylistic marks in place of quotation marks somewhat distracting, but should also heed the need to reorient our own reading practices to meet scholarly works from around the world.

Laura Deane
Flinders University

* This review was originally submitted to Critical Race and Whiteness Studies Journal.